

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4529

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0384

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SF, RH

SUBJECT: SITHOLE'S DETENTION DIMS SETTLEMENT HOPES

1. APRIL 3 SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS QUOTES ANC SPOKESMAN EDSON SITHOLE AS STATING THAT SPECIAL COURT DECISION UPHOLDING DETENTION OF ZANU LEADER REV. NDABANINGI SITHOLE HAD DESTROYED DETENTE EXERCISE. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY ASSERTED THAT ANC BOUND BY ITS PLEDGE NOT TO NEGOTIATE WITH SMITH REGIME AS LONG AS NDABANINGI SITHOLE REMAINS IN JAIL.

2. PREVIOUS DAY, SPECIAL COURT JUDGE MACDONALD READ TWO-HOUR LONG DECISION UPHOLDING SITHOLE'S DETENTION ON GROUNDS THAT AS ZANU'S LEADER AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIRTY-EIGHT "MURDERS" SINCE CEASEFIRE ACCORD. DEAD INCLUDED THIRTY-TWO AFRICANS, FOUR SOUTH AFRICAN POLICEMEN, ONE RHODESIAN POLICEMAN, AND ONE MEMBER OF RHODESIAN ARMED FORCES KILLED IN NORTHEAST RHODESIA. MACDONALD'S JUDGMENT
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DID NOT DISCUSS VALIDITY OF INITIAL CHARGES PLACED AGAINST

SITHOLE; I.E., THAT HE WAS PLOTTING TO ASSASSINATE OTHER AFRICAN NATIONALIST LEADERS.

3. RAND DAILY MAIL CORRESPONDENT ANTHONY RIDER REPORTS FROM SALISBURY THAT ANC PRESIDENT BISHOP MUZOREWA HAD TOLD HIM APRIL 1 (WHEN TRIBUNAL RULING WAS FOREGONE CONCLUSION) THAT HE HAD "FEELING" THAT SITHOLE WOULD BE FREED "AT SOME POINT."

4. DETENTION OF THREE MORE AFRICAN NATIONALISTS, MAURICE NYAGUMBO, SEBASTIAN FOYA (BOTH ZANU), AND JOHN MUTASA (ANC) BY RHODESIAN REGIME MADE PUBLIC APRIL 3. NYAGUMBO HAD BEEN IMPRISONED FOR ELEVEN YEARS PRIOR TO HIS RELEASE FOLLOWING LUSAKA AGREEMENT.

5. COMMENT: CONTINUED DETENTION OF SITHOLE PLUS ARREST OF THREE MORE NATIONALIST LEADERS WOULD SEEM TO PLACE THOSE SERIOUSLY SEEKING RHODESIAN SETTLEMENT (PARTICULARLY KAUNDA, VORSTER, AND ANC MODERATES) IN DIFFICULT POSITION AND TO SPELL THE END, FOR AT LEAST TIME BEING, OF MOVEMENT TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. WHAT REMAINS UNCLEAR IS RHODESIAN MOTIVATION FOR SITHOLE'S AND OTHERS' ARRESTS. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT RHODESIAN REGIME ATTEMPTING TO SEPARATE BLACK RADICALS FROM MODERATES IN ORDER PURSUE SETTLEMENT TALKS. THIS PRESUPPOSES RHODESIANS INDEED INTERESTED IN SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD LEAD TO EVENTUAL MAJORITY RULE. IF THIS IS SO, THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE READY TO MAKE SOME MAJOR CONCESSION REGARDING SITHOLE AND GET TALKS BACK ON TRACK. HOWEVER, IT POSSIBLE THAT SMITH AND COMPANY DO NOT WANT SETTLEMENT AND ARE FOLLOWING A COURSE DESIGNED TO SCUTTLE TALKS. WHITE RHODESIAN LEADERS STILL MAY BELIEVE THAT SOUTH AFRICANS WILL BAIL THEM OUT IN EVENT OF ESCALATED VIOLENCE, DESPITE REPEATED INSISTENCE BY VORSTER THAT SOUTH AFRICA WILL NOT RISK ITS OWN SECURITY FOR THAT OF RHODESIA. IT ALSO POSSIBLE THAT SOME MEMBERS OF RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT BELIEVE THEIR FORCES CAN HOLD OUT EVEN WITHOUT SAG ASSISTANCE. BUT WHATEVER SMITH GOVERNMENT'S MOTIVES ARE, IT WOULD APPEARHSETTLEMENT POSSIBILITIES, NEVER VERY BRIGHT, HAVE DIMMED CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT WEEKS.

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